

TALKING POINTS – WEEK 1 MEDIA BRIEFING
Kaiser Kidney Transplant Center
May 18, 2006

We feel it is very important to keep all of you and also the public well-informed of the key milestones and issues relating to the DMHC oversight of the Kaiser kidney transplant center transition. So, for the foreseeable future, we will be conducting these weekly briefings each Thursday at 11 a.m.

During the past week, the DMHC has taken an “all hands on deck” approach to help jump-start the Kaiser kidney transplant transition process.

Kaiser 800 number

One issue has emerged that has taken immediate priority – and that is to vastly improve the communication process within Kaiser to respond effectively to questions coming into the 800 number. In these crucial early days when patients are confused, frightened and frustrated, our goal must and will put customer service first. Therefore, the DMHC has worked with Kaiser to implement the following immediate steps:

- Add more agents to the hot line to handle the flow of calls coming in
- Provide better and more helpful information to patients
- Ensure callbacks with specific information to callers by clinical staff within 48 hours
- Send an update letter to all kidney patients explaining the current situation and an idea of what to expect in the coming weeks

Workplan/next steps – The other issue that I have been personally involved with this week is developing next steps, both with the transition and within our own department. Two of my top deputies have been assigned to head these efforts. The first project is the development of a Kaiser workplan and coordination of patient transition issues with UNOS, UCSF, UCD and other agencies. The second effort is coordinating patient outreach and assistance within our own HMO Help Center. The workplan will cover the actual steps needed to successfully complete the transition. Some of the priority areas that will be included in the workplan are ensuring capacity at the alternate facilities, coordination and transfer of prescriptions, continued Kaiser operations in San Francisco and waiting list management.

Help Center Coordinator – We feel very strongly that the DMHC must have trained and knowledgeable advocates available to assist patients, separate from the Kaiser process. Within our HMO Help Center, we have designated one of our clinical staff to take the lead in working exclusively with Kaiser patients to take their calls and help get them the information they need from Kaiser.

Since May 4, the HMO Help Center has handled 28 calls related to the Kaiser transplant issue, with topics ranging from actual transplant questions, to relatives calling to ask questions to questions on Medicare coverage issues.

We are also actively searching for a person with a clinical nephrology background to serve as the Kidney Health Advocate, who will be in charge of overseeing the entire transition process and patient advocacy role for the DMHC. We hope to make the announcement of this appointment in the near future.

Survey – This week, we also had a team on-site at the San Francisco Kaiser kidney transplant center to continue our investigation into the operations of that facility. Our areas of focus included ability of the plan to begin a transplant program, consumer grievances received, quality of care oversight and transition issues; continuity and coordination of care. The Help Center is also concentrating on coordination with UNOS in clarifying the wait list procedures and understanding overall transplant program components. The DHMC survey team was accompanied by a certified nephrology nurse consultant who assisted in conducting interviews with the Kaiser transplant program staff. A public report on the results will be available in mid to late June.